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Strikes blamed for 1988 decline in state's wood-products industry

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November 28, 1988

**STRIKES BLAMED FOR 1988 DECLINE IN STATE'S WOOD-PRODUCTS INDUSTRY
MISSOULA --**

Production and employment levels in Montana's wood-products industry will drop 5 to 10 percent this year because of the millworkers' strikes this past summer, according to the University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

If the past summer's strikes had not occurred, Montana's 1988 lumber and plywood production could have exceeded record levels set in 1987, says Charles E. Keegan, director of BBER's forest products industry research.

In cooperation with the Montana Wood Products Association, the BBER gathered third-quarter figures from a survey of 31 plants that produce more than 90 percent of the state's forest products.

The various strikes during June, July, August and September reduced Montana's third-quarter plywood output by about half of its capacity and also cut the state's lumber capacity by about 20 percent from 1987 levels, Keegan said.

Plywood production was 95 million square feet in the third quarter of 1988, or 47 percent less than the 178 million square feet of plywood produced in the third quarter of 1987.

Statewide lumber production in this year's third quarter was

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349 million board feet, or 76 million fewer board feet produced than in 1987.

The mills that didn't have strikes "operated at high levels and a number of them continued to operate above capacity," Keegan said.

Third-quarter payrolls for Montana's wood-products industry were down \$4.7 million from the same period in 1987, he said, because the industry had about 3,900 production workers per month, or about 950 fewer workers than in 1987's third quarter. Total wages paid to production workers were \$24,980,000 in the third quarter of 1988, compared to \$29,645,000 in the same period of 1987.

The figures refer only to production workers at sawmills, plywood plants, pulp and paper mills, particleboard and fiberboard plants and utility pole plants. These production workers account for about half the workers in Montana's forest-products industry. Estimates do not include the several thousand workers in logging, trucking and other related jobs affected by the strikes.

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